

MEMORANDUM

To: Karl Kilduff, Town of Darien Parking Committee

From: Tom Brown

Date: September 3, 2015

Subject: FINAL Existing Conditions Report

SUPPLY

Figure 1 Public Parking in Downtown Darien



The Town of Darien manages Downtown's on-street parking, as well as several off-street lots, to provide several distinct parking opportunities. These parking opportunities can be grouped into the following categories.

- Short-term parking – This is primarily parking for patrons of Downtown businesses.
- Long-Term Parking – This category includes rail commuters, downtown employees and business owners, and downtown residents.

The following sections present an overview of these parking supplies within Downtown Darien.

SHORT-TERM PARKING

Nearly all on-street spaces are managed, through the imposition of time limits, as short-term parking. In general, spaces along the Post Road are restricted to 1 hour of parking, while spaces along side streets allow two hours. 10 spaces are restricted to 15 minutes of parking in support of adjacent businesses with high-turnover needs (dry cleaners, carry-out restaurants, etc.).

Additionally, roughly 450 off-street spaces are managed as short-term parking, with limits of 1, 2, and 3 hours, as well as three spaces limited to 15 minutes. Most of the spaces in the Town-controlled lots behind the Post Road are managed as short-term parking. Combined, there are 656 on- and off-street spaces managed to accommodate Downtown's short-term parking demand.

The following table provides inventory details for Downtown's short-term parking supply.

Figure 2 Downtown Short-Term Parking Supply

Space Type	On-Street Spaces	Off-Street Spaces	All
15-Minute Spaces	10	3	13
1-Hour Spaces	58	20	78
2-Hour Spaces	137	251	388
3-Hour Spaces	-	177	177
All	205	451	656

The following map identifies the location of these spaces throughout Downtown.

Figure 3 Downtown Short-Term Parking Locations



LONG-TERM PARKING

The Town of Darien seeks to accommodate a substantial level of long-term parking demand — at least 6 contiguous hours of parking within the same space. Most of this demand is generated by commuters using the Darien Train Station. The other significant generators of long-term parking demand are Downtown employees and residents. To accommodate this demand, the Town manages several of its lots, and some on-street spaces, to provide the following parking options.

- **Commuter Permit Parking** – Spaces in lots and on-street spaces which, during weekdays, require a Town-issued parking permit, currently priced at \$345. This includes all spaces in the Leroy West Lot, even though these spaces do not require a permit after 10AM on weekdays.
- **Daily Parking** - Spaces, found at six distinct locations, which offer unlimited parking for a daily rate of \$3. These do not include the spaces in the Leroy West Lot, which become available for daily parking after 10AM.
- **Downtown Permit Parking** – Spaces within Town-managed parking lots that require a Town-issued, annual parking permit that is issued only to Downtown property and business owners, currently priced at \$85. These are primarily used by Downtown residents and employees.

In addition to these options, there is a large, privately-managed public parking lot adjacent to the Darien Station North lot. This lot provides 285 parking spaces, which are available at quarterly (\$320) monthly (\$120) and daily (\$8) rates.

Figure 4 Downtown Long-Term Parking Supply

Space Type	On-Street Spaces	Off-Street Spaces	All
Commuter Permit	12	269	281
Daily	21	309	309
Downtown Permit	-	80	80
Daily & Monthly *	-	285	285

* Private Lot

The map below identifies the location of these spaces.

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Figure 5 Downtown Short-Term Parking Locations



The following tables identify Town-Managed long-term parking supplies, by facility/location.

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Figure 6 Commuter Permit Parking Supply

Location/Facility	Spaces
Mechanic St. Lot	11
Mechanic Street North	4
Mechanic Street South	8
Squab Lane	38
Leroy West	220
All	281

Figure 7 Daily Parking Supply

Location/Facility	Spaces
Leroy Avenue East	21
Darien Station North	13
Darien Station South	50
Mechanic Street Lot	40
Tokeneke Road	98
All	330

Figure 8 Downtown Permit Parking Supply

Location/Facility	Spaces
Mechanic Street Lot	9
Center Street North	24
Center Street South	36
All	69

MANAGEMENT

MANAGING AUTHORITIES

The Town's parking resources are directly managed between the newly formed Parking Authority and the Department of Public Works. The Planning and Zoning Department and Town Selectmen also maintain control over other important management aspects.

Darien Parking Authority

The Darien Parking Authority (Parking Authority) seeks to create and implement parking solutions that balance the needs of Darien commuters, shoppers, visitors and downtown employers. Its formally-adopted goals are:

- Develop a cost effective, long-term strategic plan for parking system.
- Explore policies and improvements which maximize commuter parking on Town-owned land.
- Develop a public awareness campaign to focus on parking options and encourage new behaviors.
- Study utilization and turnover in parking lots (confirm voucher parkers as regular parkers (non-transients), churn rate for hourly spaces, etc...).
- In consultation with the Planning & Zoning Commission, identify an appropriate role for the Parking Authority in the zoning approval process for developments relying on municipal parking to meet a required parking ratio.
- Identify partners to pursue a public-private partnership for parking garage.
 - Begin dialogue for parking structure needs and approaches to financing
- Plan for the creation of new parking capacity (garage, lot, spaces).
 - Town controlled sites
 - Needs in State-owned property

The Parking Authority administers and sets the direction of the Downtown parking system, issues permits, and sets policies and rates for off-street parking. It also is responsible for enforcement of off-street regulations. It has also taken on enforcement duties related to parking regulations on Downtown streets.

Department of Public Works

The Darien Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for constructing and maintaining much of the Town's vital systems of roads, streets, bridges, storm sewers, sanitary sewers and the many related components, including all on-street parking and all Town-owned and -leased off-street lots. DPW is also responsible for lot enforcement and capital projects¹ and train station maintenance.

¹ CTDOT concurrence is required for all capital projects at the train station.

Planning and Zoning Department

The Darien Planning and Zoning Department (Planning & Zoning) is responsible for approving new development, including approval of each project's parking supply or alternative-accommodation strategy. Most development within the Downtown is eligible to provide parking area to the Town in lieu of meeting minimum parking requirements. During the approval process, Planning & Zoning coordinates with DPW and the Parking Authority to ensure that Town parking permits are available in sufficient supply to meet the expected parking needs of the project's tenants.

For several years, the existing supply has been ample enough to accommodate recent growth in the Downtown residential population, and the increased presence of commercial activity off of the Post Road. In part, this has been enabled by modest levels of commercial parking demand during evenings and weekends. Increased coordination between Planning & Zoning and DDPW and the Parking Authority is expected to be necessary as more development occurs, and as evening and weekend activity becomes more common.

Board of Selectmen

The elected representatives who make up the Board of Selectmen (BOS) serve as the Parking Authority. The BOS must approve key changes to management policies, including pricing, time limits, added or removed on-street parking, the acquisition of new off-street facilities and/or the sale or lease-termination of existing off-street facilities.

Town Administrator

Parking administration extends from the BOS through the Town Administrator position, from which overarching direction is provided for all Parking Authority activities.

Police Department/Traffic Commission

These parties are responsible for maintaining on-street parking and enforcing curbside regulations. These regulations largely determine where short-term parking can be provided, while the police department provides staffing resources for enforcing one-hour time limits.

KEY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Pricing

Short-term Parking

All short-term parking in Downtown is free.

Commuter Permits

Annual permits are sold for individual lots, at \$345, and are valid for one calendar year. Annual permits can be purchased for parking in the Leroy West lot (Darien residents only), Squab Lane, the Mechanic Street Lot, and spaces along Mechanic Street. Combined, ~281 spaces are available to permit holders each day.

When compared to Darien's regional peers, using data provided in the 2013 SWRPA Rail Station Parking Study Update, the current annual permit rate is below the regional-peer average. The current permit rate is slightly less than the \$377 average for all of the New Haven Main and Branch Line stations. The average, exclusive of the three stations that do not charge at all for permits, is \$416. When comparing to rates among the closest Main Line stations outside of Darien — East Norwalk, South Norwalk, Rowayton, Noroton Heights, Stamford, and Old Greenwich — the average rises to \$588.

Figure 9 Annual Permit Rates among Darien's Peer Stations



Daily Spaces

Commuters without an annual permit have several options, including the two on-site lots at the Darien station. Other options include select spaces along Mechanic Street and Tokeneke Road, all spaces within the Leroy East Lot, and select spaces within the Mechanic Street Lot. After 10AM, non-permit-holders can also pay the day rate to park in any spaces that remain empty within the Leroy West Lot.

The current day rate for all lots and locations is \$3/day. Combined, a total of 330 spaces are available for daily parking each day, plus any spaces that remain empty after 10AM in the Leroy West Lot. When compared to Darien's regional peers, the current daily parking rate is below average, and it is well below the daily rate at the sole, privately-operated public lot in Downtown, which charges \$8 per day.

Figure 10 Daily Parking Rates among Darien's Peer Stations



This is particularly significant, given that Daily Parking supplies are the most consistently, and most intensely constrained spaces in all of Downtown.

Downtown Permits

To accommodate Downtown employee and resident parking needs, the Town sells permits to Downtown property and business owners, for use by themselves and their tenants/residents. Permits are sold at \$85 each, per year, and allow holders to park in designated areas of several Town lots, exempt from any time limits other than overnight parking restrictions.

Payment and Enforcement Media

Annual permits are provided as hang-tags that are hung from a vehicle's rear-view mirror. Vehicles linked to an annual permit are also identified in a database that can be accessed by enforcement personnel to double-check the permit status before issuing a ticket.

Daily parking is charged via pay stations or through a "pay by app" system. The pay stations operate on the pay-by-plate model. Users enter their vehicle's license plate identification when paying. These identifications are stored in a database that enforcement personnel access to match vehicles to payments and issue tickets to those without a recorded payment.

Enforcement is also starting to incorporate License Plate Recognition (LPR) technology, which can greatly expand enforcement capacities and improve its efficacy.

Revenue Capture

In 2012, Daily parking generated \$300,000 in revenue, while Commuter Permit revenue was \$280,000. This revenue supports station operating expenses and capital investments.

Time Limits

Downtowns that emphasize free, short-term parking tend to rely heavily on setting and enforcing limits on parking duration in order to generate and maintain turnover and space availability. Prime spaces may offer as little as one hour, while the most common time limit is usually two hours. Downtown Darien is typical in this sense, particularly regarding its on-street spaces. Within the Town's free, off-street parking lots, two-, and three-hour spaces are most common.

Figure 11 Short-Term Parking Signs Along Tokeneke Road



For time limits to be effective, allowed durations have to both meet the needs of customers and discourage stays that reduce of turnover and availability. This can be very challenging, particularly as the types of downtown destinations evolve over time, changing the duration of visitor/customer parking stays. Enforcement tends to also be a major challenge. Recording parking duration can be labor intensive and tends to rely on patterns of observation that can become easily anticipated, particularly by employees and other frequent parking users. However, the Town has invested in enforcement technology in the form of license-plate readers that can make this much more effective.

Permit Wait List

The Town maintains wait lists for permits associated with lots/location for which demand exceeds supply. The wait list for annual permits for the Leroy West lot has long been a source of frustration among Darien residents. The average wait for those on the list, until recently, was 10 years. To ensure that those on the wait list are actively seeking a parking permit, the town recently imposed an annual \$10 fee for remaining on the wait list. This reduced the number of names on the wait list by about half.

Nonetheless, annual permits, until recently, remained available for the Mechanic Street Lot and on-street spaces along Mechanic Street. This would indicate that those on the wait list for Leroy West are, in fact, choosing to wait on this list despite having the same-priced option of a permit

elsewhere. Thus, the wait list for Leroy West, which remains extensive, should be viewed as reflecting a strong preference for this location over alternative locations.

Park-Once

Downtown parking is managed to create a “park-once” environment for all downtown shoppers, diners, visitors, employees, and residents — meaning that most of their parking options are not associated with any particular destination or set of destinations. The primary benefits of park-once include the following.

- Reduced supply needs – by reducing the need to provide redundant supplies at each destination, demand can be met, and business can thrive on fewer spaces
- More pedestrian activity – park-once, by free visitors to explore freely, on foot, creates more active sidewalks which both creates a more vibrant and attractive environment and exposes visitors to more shops, services, restaurants, etc. than they would likely notice from behind a windshield.
- Reduced Main Street traffic and congestion – Fewer parking actions = less traffic. More importantly it = fewer turning movements along main commercial streets (the Post Road, in Darien). This makes for a more pleasant and safer environment for all, including drivers.
- Expanded overflow options for all businesses – It is very difficult for downtown businesses to meet their own peak parking needs. Downtowns in which most destinations try to tend to have far more parking than is ever used at one time — and individual destinations still never have enough parking when they are busiest.
- Improve customer experience – Park-once can minimize or eliminate signs that threaten to tow customers for parking in the wrong lot/ visiting the wrong business.

Figure 12 The Park Once District
Conventional Development

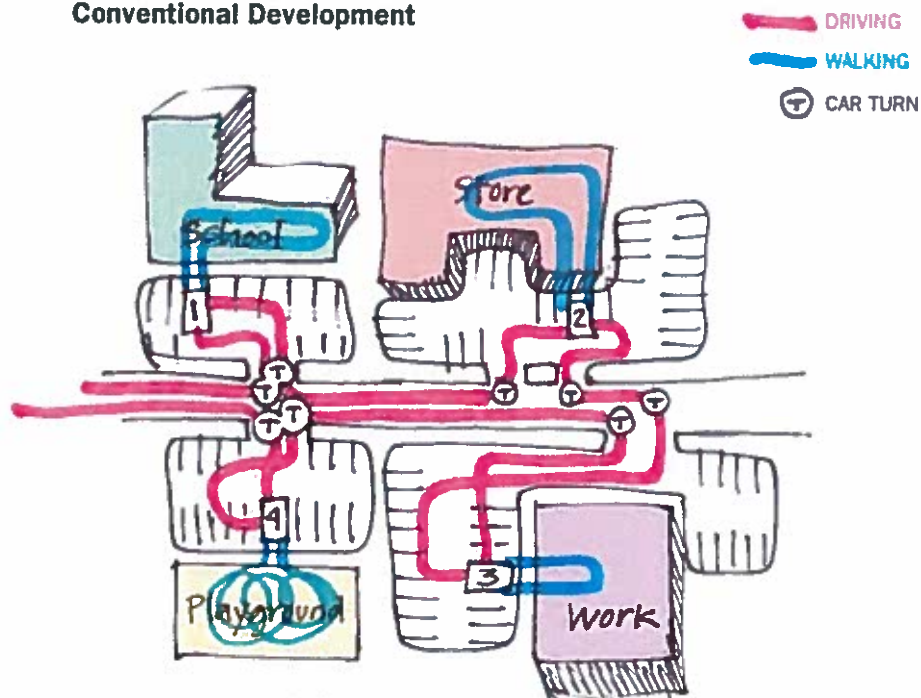


Image: Holly Parker

Mixed Use – Park Once Development

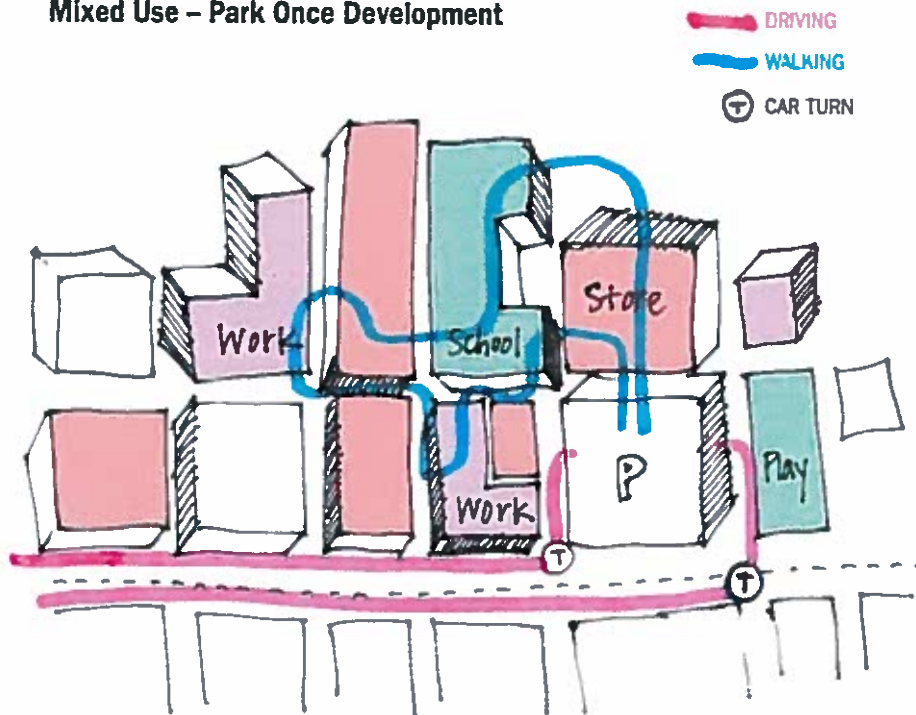


Image: Holly Parker

Darien has achieved remarkable park-once success by creating consolidated, public parking areas behind Post Road properties. This has largely been a result of zoning strategies, as described further below, and strategic investments in lot development, improvement, maintenance, and management. Combined, these efforts provide substantial parking facilities for Downtown visitors, expanding short-term, park-once options well beyond on-street parking.

These lots make the most of their capacities by serving all Downtown destinations at all times, providing far more value than would be possible if their spaces were parceled out among, and reserved for, individual destinations. Perhaps most importantly, these facilities mean a much more visitor-friendly, low-stress parking environment. The Town's approach has been adopted, to various degrees, by several private-lot owners, who either don't enforce signed restrictions, share their lots during off-peak hours, or don't restrict lot access at all other than to set time limits that mimic those in surrounding Town lots.

Figure 13 Private Lot Sign That Accommodates Park Once Use



The most significant barrier limiting the success of the Town's park-once efforts, is the limited number of pedestrian crossings, and their relative lack of safety features, along the Post Road. This has been well-documented in several previous studies, but improvement options are limited by this street's State Highway designation.

DEMAND

To assess current parking demand patterns, and the capacity of existing supplies to accommodate its most common peaks, hourly occupancy surveys were completed, from 7AM to 6PM, on a representative weekday (Thursday, April 23rd).

OVERVIEW

The table below summarizes key findings among key supply sub-inventories.

Figure 14 Average and Peak Utilization within key Supply Sub-Inventories

Parking Options	Spaces	Average Utilization	Peak Utilization	Time of Peak
Short-Term Parking*	656	47%	77%	1PM
Commuter Permit Spaces*	281	63%	70%	2PM
Daily*	330	97%	99%	10AM - 2 PM
Downtown Permit Spaces	69	53%	65%	10AM, 1-2PM

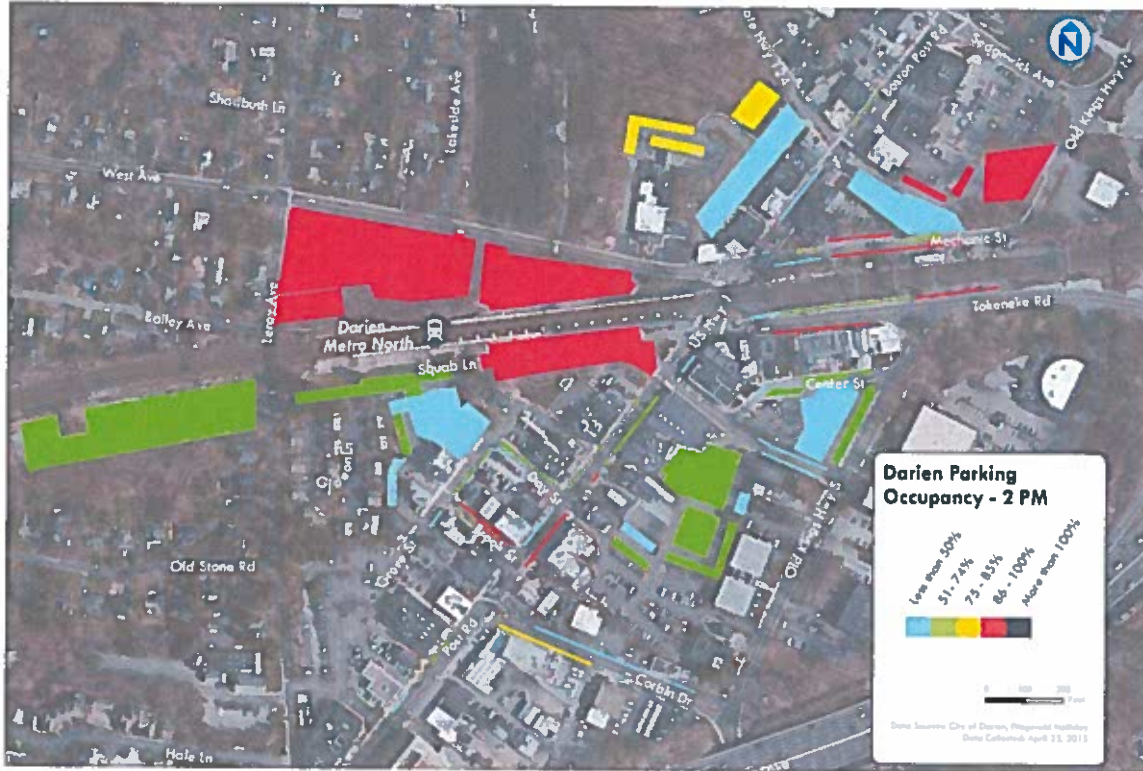
* Includes both on- and off-street locations

Viewed at this level, the only sub-inventory of supply that experiences truly constrained space-availability conditions during the day is the sub-set of Daily parking spaces. No other sub-inventory supply approaches optimal levels of utilization (generally considered to be between 85-90%, at peak). When this data is mapped, however, it becomes clear that several, distinct facilities and locations do experience constrained space availability, particularly during the midday peak.

The map of utilization conditions at 2PM presented below, indicates that all options for daily parking are essentially full, leaving constrained park-and-ride access to Darien Train Station for anyone who lacks a Commuter Parking permit. The recent policy change allowing daily parking in the Leroy West lot after 10AM provides ample opportunity, at a high-demand location, for drivers who can wait until then, and know about it.

On-street parking and certain Downtown Permit locations also experience constrained availability at this time.

Figure 15 Utilization at 2PM



The following sections provide a more detailed overview of utilization conditions within key Downtown sub-inventories.

SHORT-TERM PARKING

All short-term parking options, with the exception of off-street, one-hour spaces, offered significant availability throughout the day, and even in the peak. Demand for these 656 spaces, consistently peaked around midday. In all, at peak-demand, there were 115 empty short-term parking spaces. The table below summarizes key occupancy data for these spaces, organized by key sub-inventories.

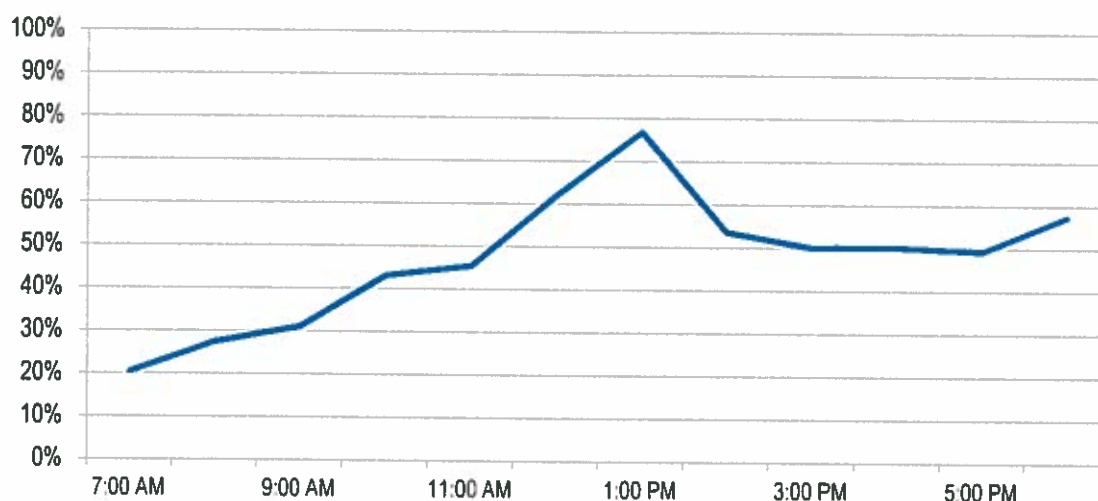
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Figure 16 Utilization Among Short-Term Parking Options

Parking Options	Spaces	Average Utilization	Peak Utilization	Spaces Available @ 1PM Peak
15-Minute	13	21%	38%	8
1-Hr. On-Street	58	52%	79%	21
1-Hr. Off-Street	20	53%	95%	1
All 1-Hour	78	52%	72%	22
2-Hr On-Street	137	46%	72%	38
2-Hr Off-Street	251	51%	81%	47
All 2-Hour	388	49%	78%	85
3-Hour	177	42%	79%	38
All Short-Term	656	47%	77%	153

The chart below identifies utilization levels among all short-term parking spaces, as recorded each hour during the survey day.

Figure 17 Hourly Utilization Among Short-Term Parking Spaces



For a clearer sense of how these conditions change during a typical weekday across the Downtown, the following maps identify utilization levels at key times of day. Such maps also give a clearer sense of the user experience, particularly for visitors less familiar with Downtown parking, as limited availability at just a few locations can consistently create perceptions that availability is lacking in general.

Figure 18 Short-Term Parking Utilization at 10AM



At 10 AM, ample availability remains in most locations. The most notable break from this is among the on-street blocks along Grove and Brook Streets, and a small lot off of Grove Street, behind Neat Coffee shop. This indicates a likely clustering of destinations that experience relatively strong morning demand. Nonetheless, for drivers seeking convenient access to one of these destinations, there is available parking nearby.

Figure 19 Short-Term Parking Utilization at 1PM



By 1PM, short-term spaces in Center Street South are essentially fully occupied, and the majority of other short-term parking options are constrained, reflecting the intensity of the lunch-hour demand peak in Downtown. Somewhat ironically, on-street spaces consistently offer greater availability compared to nearby lots, perhaps indicating a preference for off-street options among many drivers, and/or a perception that these spaces offer longer parking-duration options or are simpler to navigate compared to finding a space along Downtown streets.

This map in particular indicates the impact of limited and sub-optimal pedestrian crossing points along the Post Road. North of the station, the Mechanic Street lot offers significant availability, while lots on the other side of the Post Road have very few empty spaces. Similarly, south of the station, the Grove Street Lot has ample availability, while conditions are much more constrained in the Center Street lots.

Figure 20 Short-Term Parking Utilization at 4PM



By 4PM, demand has gone down substantially, leaving ample availability in most locations and facilities. Exceptions to this include isolated blocks of on-street parking, and the short-term lots located in the Tilley Park area.

Figure 21 Short-Term Parking Utilization at 6PM



6PM surveys indicate the emergence of an evening peak, likely resulting from growth among eating and drinking establishments in parts of the Downtown. There is a distinct zone in which short-term parking demand approximates midday levels, along the Post Road, south of the Darien Train Station, and within the Center Street lots. This may indicate a need to explore extending time limits, and their enforcement, into evening hours, to ensure convenient customer parking in support of businesses operating at these times.

LONG-TERM PARKING

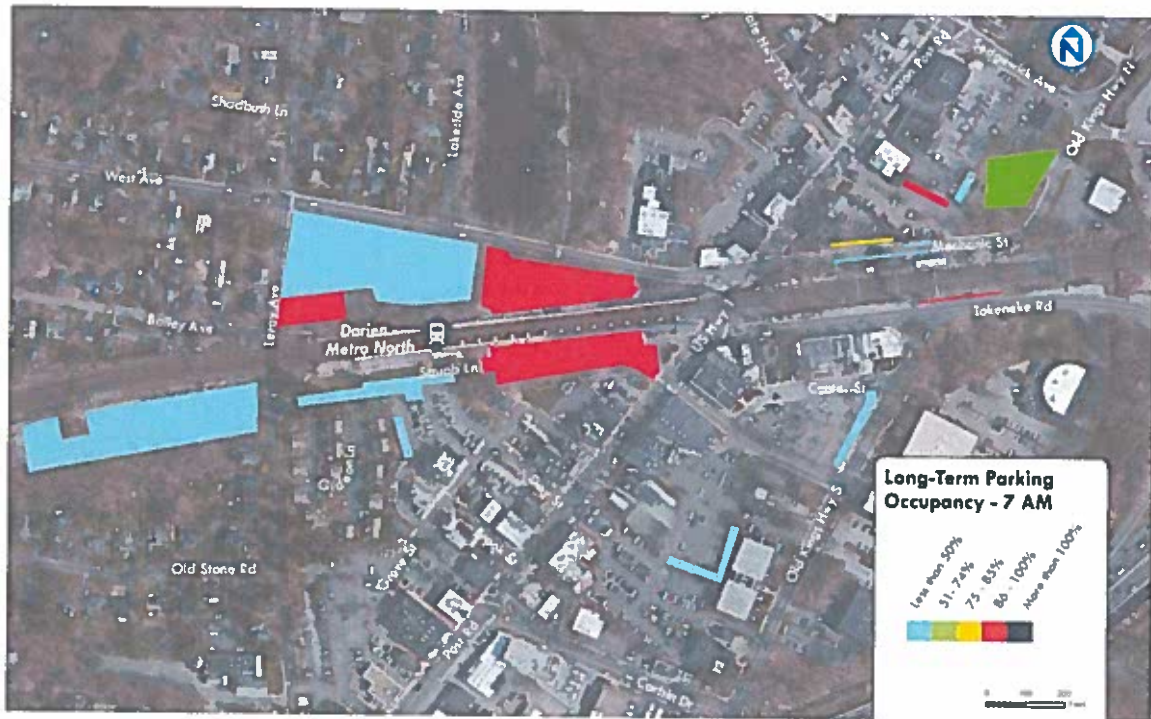
The table below summarizes key occupancy data for these spaces, organized by key sub-inventories.

Figure 22 Utilization Among Long-Term Parking Options

Parking Options	Spaces	Average Utilization	Peak Utilization	Spaces Available @ Peak	Timing of Peak
Commuter Permit	281	63%	70%	85	12-2PM
Daily Spaces	330	97%	99%	2	1PM
Downtown Permit	80	53%	65%	28	1-3PM
Daily and Monthly Permit	285	85%	97%	9	1-3PM

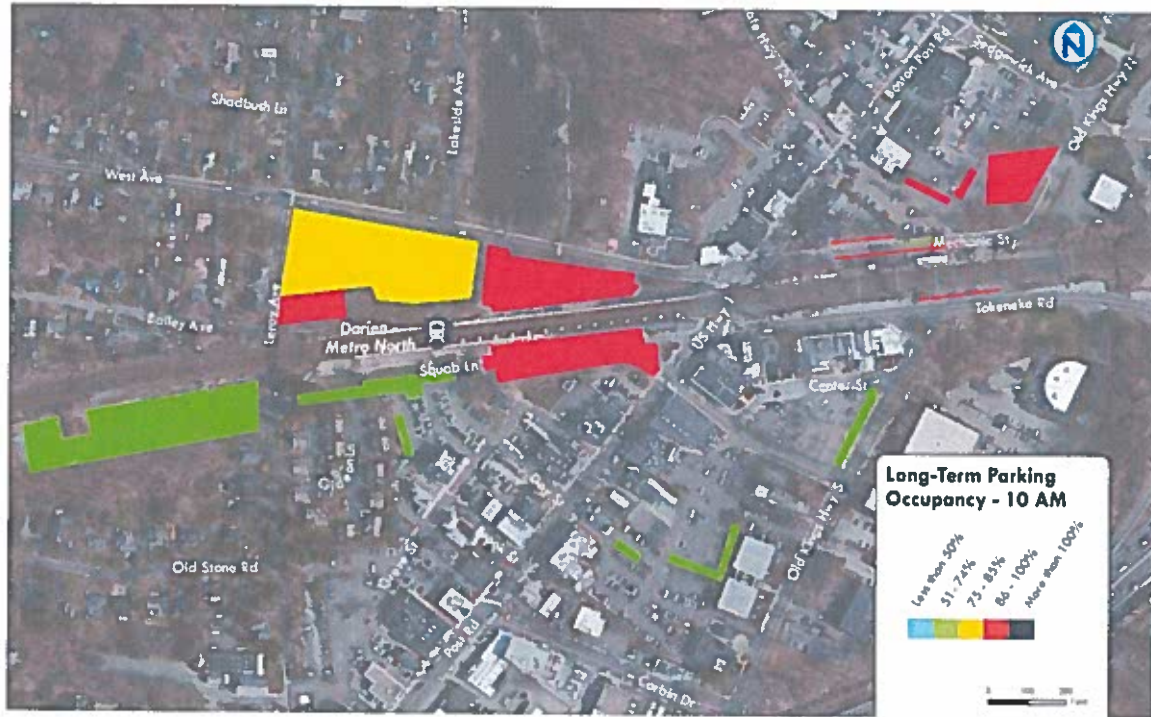
For a clearer sense of how these conditions change throughout a typical weekday across the Downtown, the following maps identify utilization levels at key times of day.

Figure 23 Long-Term Parking Utilization at 7AM



Utilization at all Daily Parking options outside of Mechanic Street was at or near capacity by 7AM. This lot, too, was at 90% utilization by the following hour. By contrast, Commuter Permit lots were much less full. Downtown Permit parking was also generally available.

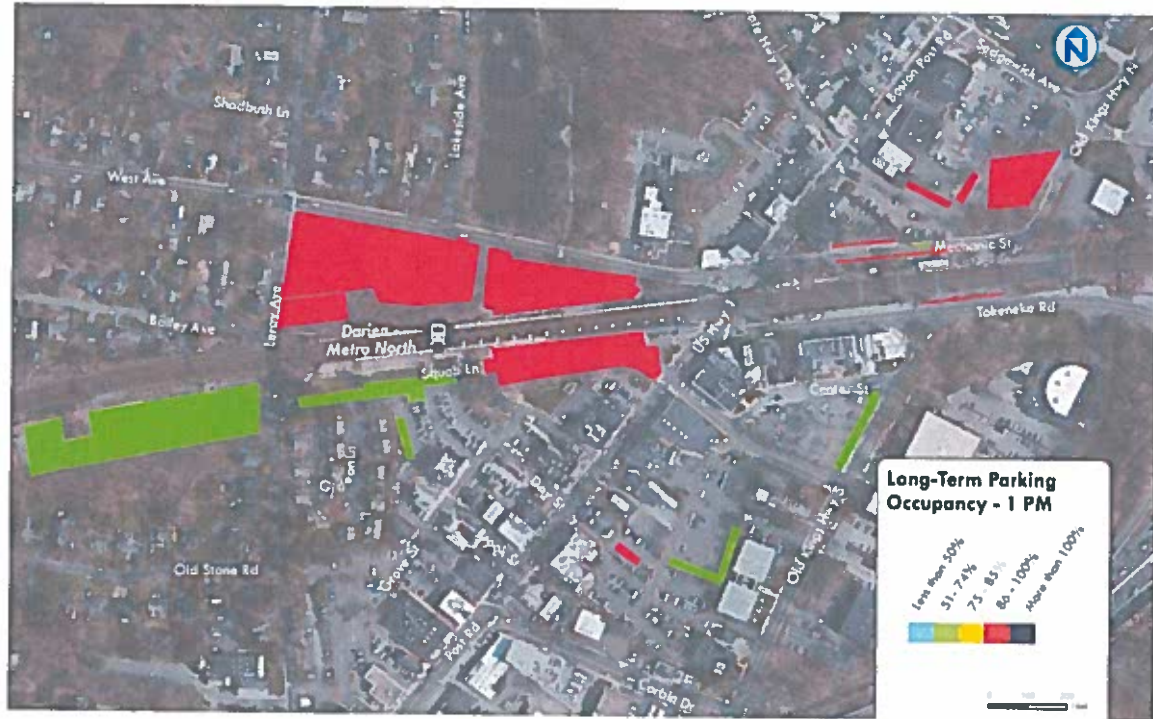
Figure 24 Long-Term Parking Utilization at 10AM



By 10 AM, utilization within Commuter Permit lots is notably higher, and Downtown Permit spaces have begun to fill up, particularly north of the train station. Capacity within the private lot began to wane at this late-morning hour.

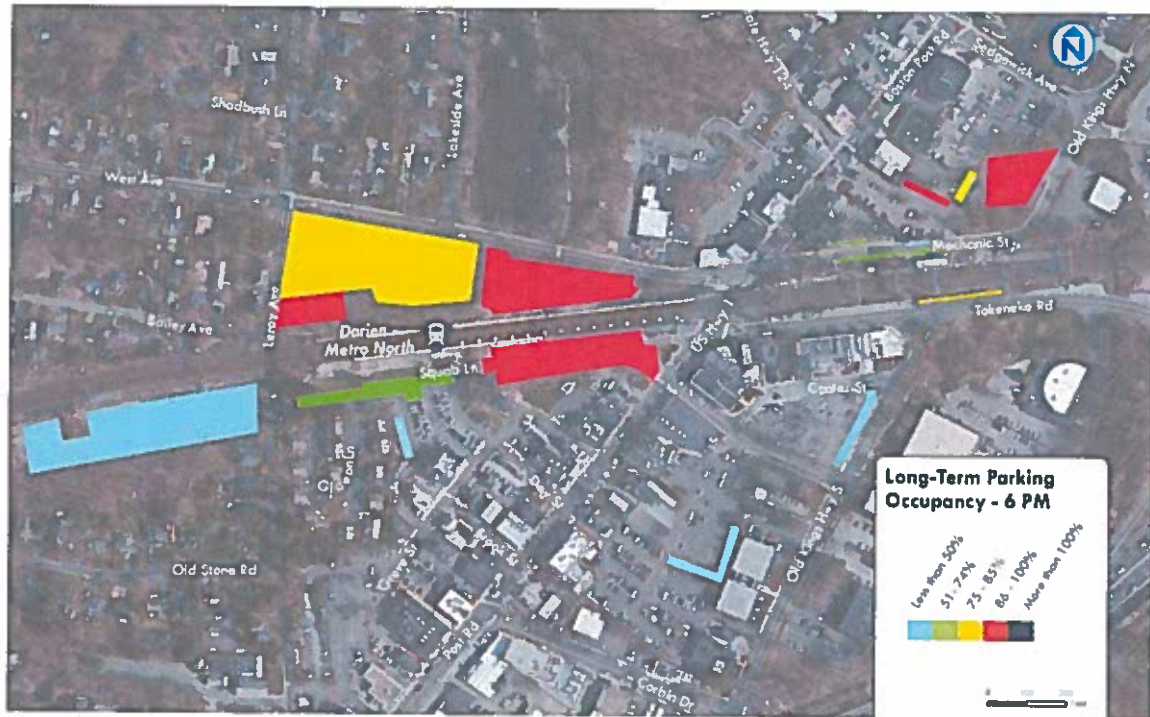
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Figure 25 Long-Term Parking Utilization at 1PM



Specific Commuter Permit and Downtown Permit locations still had plenty of availability at this peak-demand period. Just about all other long-term parking options are full to capacity at this time.

Figure 26 Long-Term Parking Utilization at 6PM



By the time of this evening survey, demand was noticeably easing in most permit lots, and in the privately-owned (Koons) lot, but remained high among Daily Parking locations. It is worth noting that Downtown Permit options north of the station remained constrained throughout the day. While availability remained ample among options to the south, pedestrian conditions traversing the railroad overpass likely make these options seem quite remote to residents and employees in the northern section of Downtown.

A more detailed analysis of conditions within the three Town-managed long-term parking sub-inventories is provided below.

Commuter Permit Spaces

Utilization among these spaces grew throughout the morning period, but peaked at just 70%, leaving 85 spaces empty. Most of these were located in the Leroy West Lot. Despite the lengthy wait list for this lot, and the fact that it is made available for public parking at \$3/day after 10AM, it had the lowest utilization of any long-term parking facility in Downtown. It is worth noting that there was no significant increase in utilization after 10AM, when daily parking is allowed. This may indicate that this new opportunity may need to be promoted to increase awareness.

The table below summarizes key occupancy data for Commuter Permit spaces, organized by facility/location.

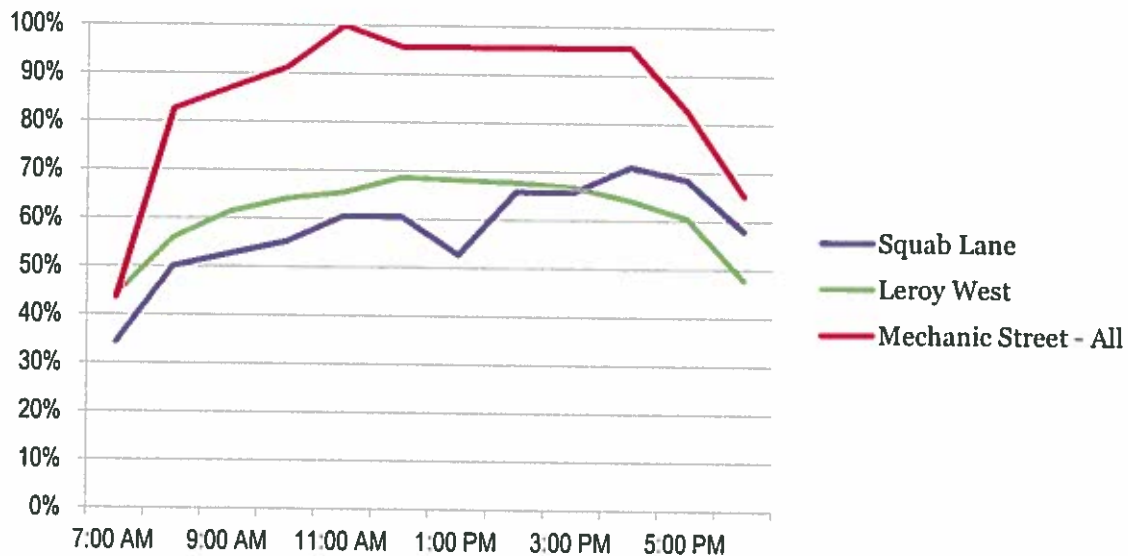
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Figure 27 Utilization Among Commuter Permit Parking Facilities/Locations

Location/Facility	Spaces	Average Utilization	Peak Utilization	Spaces Available @ Peak
Mechanic St. Lot	11	92%	100%	0
Mechanic Street N	4	71%	100%	0
Mechanic Street S	8	84%	100%	0
Squab Lane	38	58%	71%	11
Leroy West	220	61%	69%	69
All	281	63%	70%	85

The chart below illustrates utilization levels among all Commuter Permit parking spaces, as recorded each hour during the survey day. As shown, utilization is consistently much higher among the 23 spaces provided on Mechanic Street and in the Mechanic Street lot, which were fully occupied by 11AM, while dozens of spaces remained available in the Squab and Leroy West lots.

Figure 28 Hourly Utilization Among Commuter Permit Parking Spaces



Daily Parking Spaces

Utilization among these spaces was essentially at capacity all day. The table below summarizes key occupancy data for Daily Parking spaces, organized by facility/location.

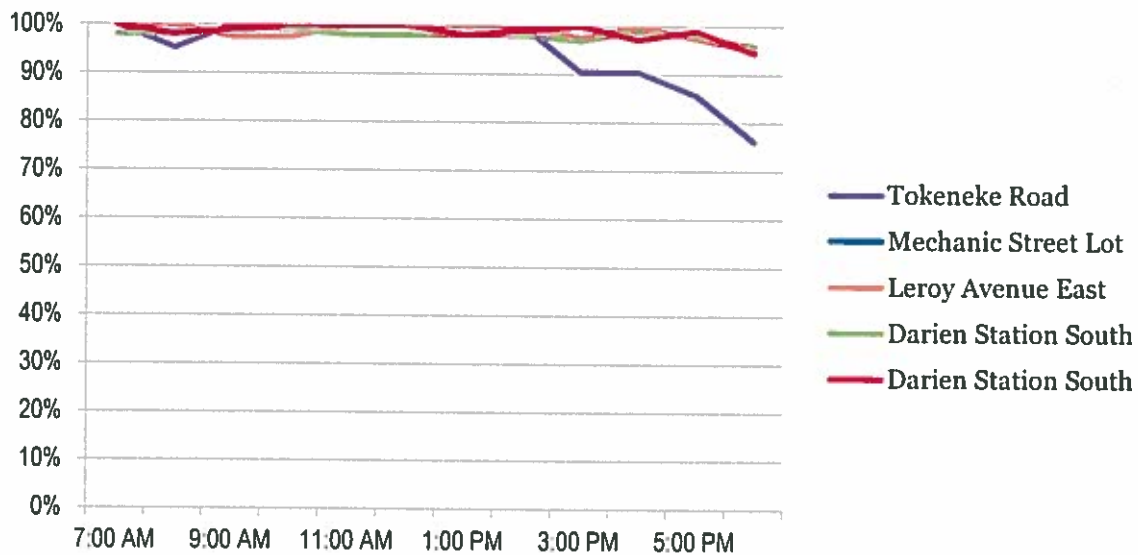
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Figure 29 Utilization Among Daily Parking Facilities/Locations

Location/Facility	Spaces	Average Utilization	Peak Utilization	Spaces Available @ Peak
Leroy Avenue East	40	99%	100%	0
Darien Station North	98	98%	99%	1
Darien Station South	108	99%	100%	0
Mechanic Street Lot	63	99%	100%	0
Tokeneke Road	21	95%	100%	0
All	330	97%	99%	1

The chart below illustrates utilization levels among all Daily parking spaces, as recorded each hour during the survey day. As shown, utilization is essentially at full capacity by 7AM, and remains virtually unchanged before a slow decline commences around 3PM. During the last survey, at 6PM, utilization remained above 90% at all but one location, which was 76% utilized.

Figure 30 Hourly Utilization Among Daily Parking Spaces



It is worth noting that, when the Town-lot spaces fill up, the Koon's lot provides overflow capacity, filling later in the morning with capacity remaining until around 10AM.

Downtown Permit

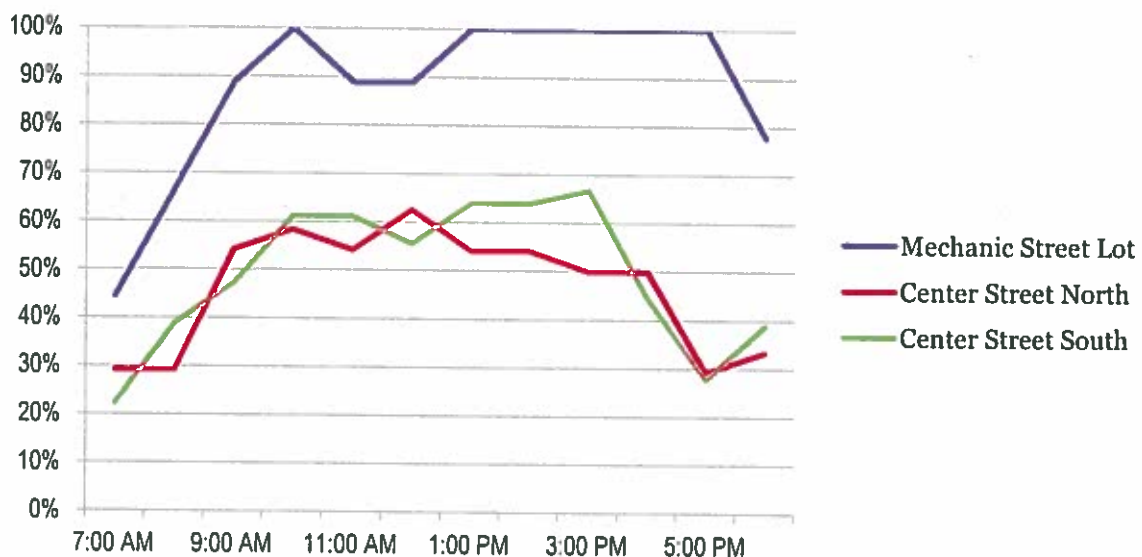
Utilization among these spaces varied significantly by location. In general, the Mechanic Street Lot spaces were better utilized, likely due to their limited supply and the fact that this is the sole, Downtown Permit parking location north of the tracks. The table below summarizes key occupancy data for Downtown Permit spaces, organized by facility/location.

Figure 31 Utilization Among Downtown Permit Parking Facilities/Locations

Location/Facility	Spaces	Average Utilization	Peak Utilization	Spaces Available @ Peak
Mechanic Street Lot	9	88%	100%	0
Center Street North	24	47%	63%	9
Center Street South	36	49%	67%	12
All	69	53%	65%	21

The chart below illustrates utilization levels among all Downtown Permit parking spaces, as recorded each hour during the survey day. As shown, utilization is at full capacity among the Mechanic Street spaces by 10AM, and remains virtually unchanged until after 5PM. By contrast, the spaces within the Center Street lots maintained available capacity throughout the day.

Figure 32 Hourly Utilization Among Downtown Permit Parking Spaces



TURNOVER

To develop a sense of compliance levels with respect to time limits among Downtown Darien's prime, short-term parking resources, turnover surveys were completed along the Post Road and in two short-term lots located off of Grove Street. Each hour, from 7AM to 6PM, a license plate ID (the last 3 digits of a plate) was recorded for each car observed to be parked in these locations. This data was then used to document patterns of duration (how long each car was observed in the same space) and turnover (total vehicles parked throughout the survey day).

Post Road

On the Post Road, 63 one-hour parking spaces were surveyed. A total of 293 unique vehicles parked in these spaces during the survey day. Of these, 82% parked for less than one hour and another 15% parked between one and two hours. Only seven vehicles were parked between two and four hours, and one for more than eight hours.

Despite several dozen vehicles noted to have exceeded the time limit, few tickets were observed on parked vehicles.

Grove Street Lots

Within the two Grove Street lots, 89 two-hour parking spaces were surveyed. A total of 151 unique vehicles parked in these spaces. Of those, 57% were parked for less than two hours. Another 27% stayed between two to three hours and 8% stayed between three and four hours. The survey also noted a total of eight vehicles parked between four and eight hours and four parked for more than eight hours.

Despite only slightly more than half of parked vehicles complying with posted time limits, few tickets were observed on parked vehicles.

ZONING PARKING REQUIREMENTS

The Zoning Regulations of the Town of Darien, Connecticut was adopted in May, 1999 and last revised in 2006.

AUTHORITY TO REQUIRE PARKING

The Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) - Sec. 8-2 authorizes the municipal zoning commission (or planning and zoning commission) to regulate the erection, construction, reconstruction, alteration or use of buildings or structures and the use of land.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The following table presents the minimum off-street vehicle parking requirements for select land use categories. These requirements apply throughout the town, including Downtown.

Land Use Type	Requirement
Multi-family dwelling	2.5 spaces for each dwelling unit
Housing for the Elderly	1.5 spaces for each dwelling unit
Retail, Commercial sales and services	1 space for each 150 sq. ft. of gross floor area
Restaurant or place dispensing food excluding patron bar area	1 space for each 100 sq. ft. of gross floor area.
Outdoor seating/dining	17 seats or over will require 1 space for each 2 seats thereafter. No spaces are required for the first 16 outdoor seats.
Patron bar area of restaurants taverns and cafes	1 space for each 20 sq. ft. of gross patron floor area.

THE TOWN PARKING LOT EXEMPTION

Section 1057 of the zoning code articulates what has proven to be a very successful incentive for Downtown-based property owners to provide rear-lot space to the Town for purpose of expanding Town-provided parking lots. Property owners who provide a portion of their site to the Town, for purpose of building/expanding Town-managed parking, can have all of their parking and loading requirements waived. Because of the success of this incentive, most of the parking behind Post Road buildings within the Downtown is public parking today.

The incentive has also resulted in redevelopment of Post Road parcels, to moderately greater densities than would otherwise be expected or possible. Such densities, in turn, help support walking- and transit-oriented development within Downtown.

Key provisions within Section 1057 include the following.

In the CBD Zone where the entire portion of a lot lying to the rear of a Rear Building Line, established by the Commission, shall be given to and accepted by the Town by deed of conveyance or by perpetual easement, for permanent use as a public parking area, the following modifications of these Regulations shall apply:

- *No rear yard, parking or loading space shall be required, maximum building coverage limitations shall not apply, and the maximum permissible floor area shall be equal to twice the area of such lot, not including therein any required front or side yard, remaining after such gift of such portion, provided that any building or addition constructed thereon shall have a direct public entrance from said public parking area.*
- *The permissible total floor area of the building may be increased within the limits established by maximum building height, provided that:*
 - *An equal amount of open space on the same lot shall be reserved from building coverage and shall be developed and maintained by the owner as a plaza or mall space open to the general public.*

Design Standards

No parking is allowed in front of a building in most business zones, except where the building setback is at least 75 feet. Additional design guidelines, intended to support walking and cycling within Downtown, are included in the Town's Commercial Design Guidelines, as follows.

- Minimize conflicts between pedestrian and vehicle movement through design elements, fewer curb cuts and safe handicapped access.
- Allow for possible bike paths, pedestrian access and coordination with public transit, such as the train station. (See Zoning Regulations Sections 1024.2, 1025.4)
- Minimize blank walls and allow for parking in the rear of the building.
- Include bike racks in strategic locations.

Other Key Provisions

- The PZC may approve shared parking for two or more uses.
- On-Site Location – Required, except where one common facility can be provided for two adjoining lots.
 - The PZC may also allow off-site parking in the same ownership and within 500 feet of the principal use where it determines it is impractical or unnecessary to keep the parking on the same lot.
- Parking Structures are prohibited, except for one level underground in lieu of surface parking where this allows space to be used for open space, landscaping, or similar amenities.
- Within the CBD, the PZC may grant a Special Exception that reduces the parking requirements for restaurants where it finds there is sufficient on-site parking space for all the uses on the site.

Available In Lieu Fee Option

Section 8-2c of the Connecticut General Statutes authorizes a zoning commission (or planning & zoning commission) to require payment of a fee in lieu of parking requirements. The commission may adopt a regulation that allows an applicant to pay a fee to the town in lieu of any requirement to provide parking spaces in connection with any use of land. Such regulation must provide that no fee be accepted by the town unless the commission has found that the number of parking spaces which would be required in connection with the proposed land use: (1) Would result in an

excess of parking spaces for that land use or in the area surrounding it; or (2) Could not be physically located on the parcel of land for which the use is proposed.

Any such payment to the town, city or borough must be deposited in a fund established solely for the acquisition, development, expansion or capital repair of municipal parking facilities, traffic or transportation related capital projects, the provision or operating expenses of transit facilities designed to reduce reliance on private automobiles and capital programs to facilitate carpooling or vanpooling. The proceeds of such fund shall not be considered a part of the municipal general fund.

FINDINGS FROM THE DARIEN PARKING STUDY (2007)

Issues Identified

The 2007 Parking Study identified several, key issues related to parking requirements, primarily through input from stakeholder interviews.

- Parking requirements for some land uses is not well matched to demand
- Parking requirements can constrain the Town's ability to meet the goal of increasing intensity of uses downtown
- Interconnectivity of parking downtown should be more strongly encouraged – like plans for the Center Street lot expansion
- The regulations do not provide enough incentives to prompt developers to offer creative solutions to employee parking
- Some parking waivers must go to the ZBA as requests for variances
- There is a need to understand the downtown parking supply as a whole, including potential future demand, and opportunities to meet the demand long term. This information is essential to framing how the zoning regulations should regulate new development and attendant parking downtown.

Key Recommendations

- Provide the greatest variety of options for both developers and the Planning and Zoning Commission when meeting the parking demand downtown – but with clear criteria for when varied approaches are applicable and how
- Consider allowing parking structures to be built downtown, as a Special Permit use with carefully crafted standards for setback, architectural design, and physical encroachment limitations
- Support gradual shift by new development or redevelopment to greater reliance on the municipal parking supply
- Add options for meeting the parking requirements in the downtown
- Provide more, and clear, incentives for developers to meet Darien parking objectives.
- Reduce minimum requirements, and add maximum standards that limit private parking.
- Allow a fee to be paid in-lieu of providing parking spaces.
 - The fee per space would best be determined based on an analysis and advice of a parking financing expert.

- Provide referral to the parking authority for any downtown application.
- The Commission in conjunction with the Board of Selectmen should explore opportunities for more public-private partnerships to take advantage of some of the underutilized private parking in and near the downtown in a manner that benefits all the stakeholder parties.

FINDINGS FROM ROUTE 1 CORRIDOR STUDY

An estimated 1,161 new parking spaces would have to be provided to satisfy the current zoning regulations' parking requirements to support the anticipated 190,000 sq ft of new development coming in by 2020. Using a model taking into account parking efficiencies in mixed-use districts, this report estimated that approximately only 563 new parking spaces would satisfy the anticipated parking demands for new development under the 2020 Downtown Development Scenario. *This is roughly 50% of the 1,161 spaces required by current Zoning Regulations for the same scenario.*

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

VISITOR SURVEY

The following is a review of findings a survey of downtown visitors; those who identified shopping, dining, and services as the primary purpose of their most recent trip to the downtown/Darien Station area.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Automobile use, either by driving alone, riding along, or being dropped off, dominates the mode share of the shopping group with 100% of all trips combined. Those who walk, ride a bike or scooter, or use transit to access downtown are, thus far, absent from the results for this group.

Figure 33 Mode Share

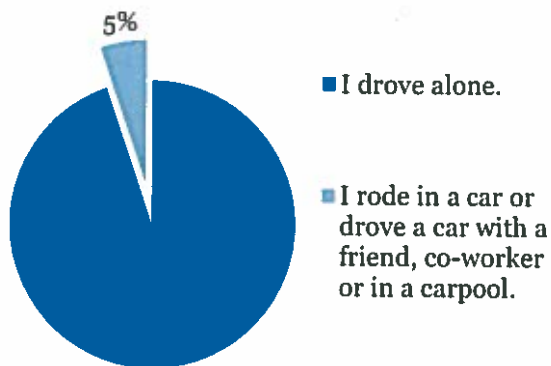
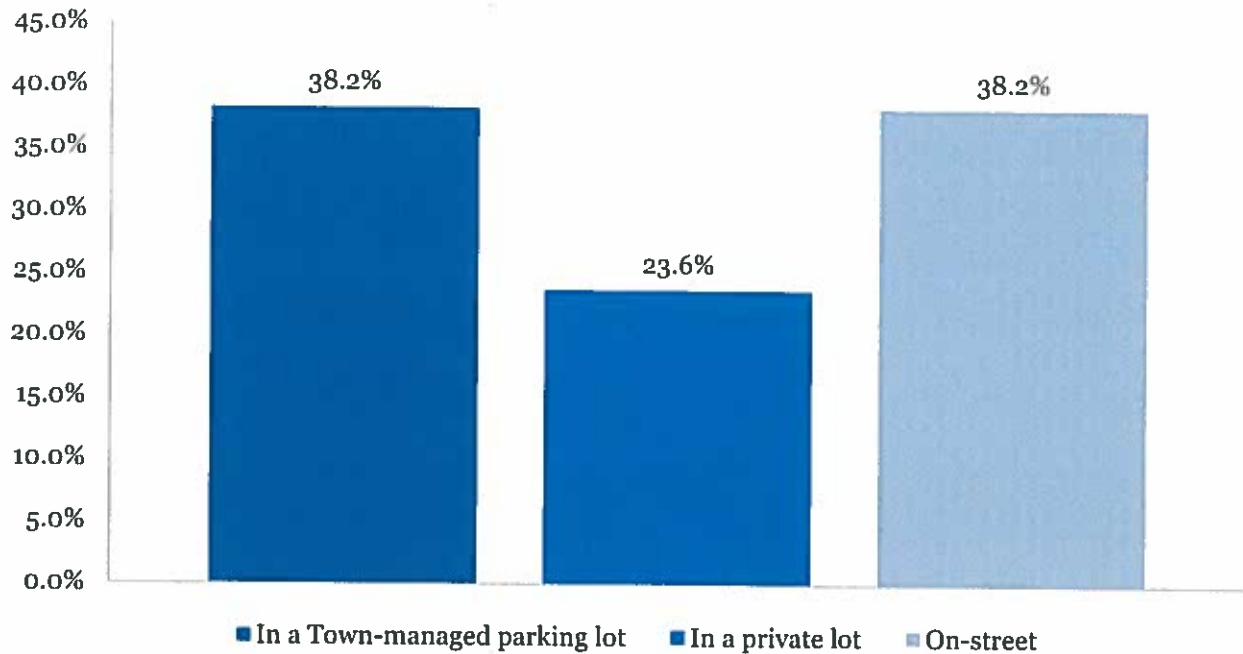


Figure 34 Parking Location



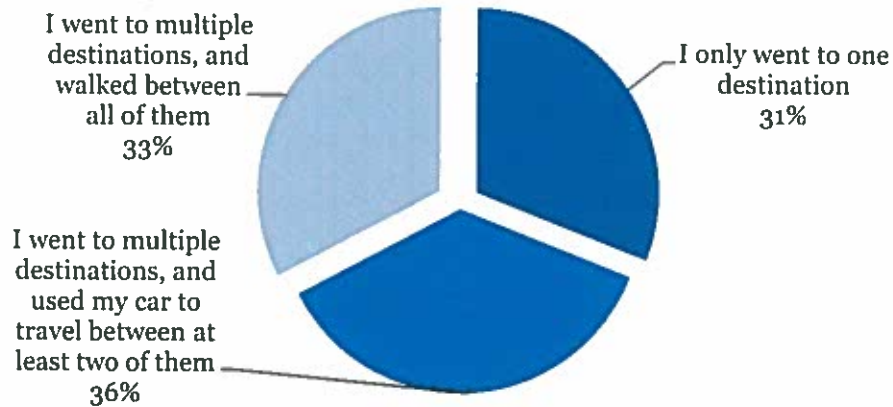
Those in this group generally make trips to the downtown mostly on a weekly basis or less. Visitor parking activity is split fairly evenly between the Town lots and on-street spaces. To a somewhat lesser degree, this group also relies upon various private lots associated with specific destinations.

Preferences and Satisfaction

There is no problem with parking. Walking 5 minutes to destination from car is not a hardship.

Preliminary findings show that the current parking system serves this group well. Those in the shopping group overwhelmingly identified location (55%) and ease of finding a space (45%) as their most important consideration when choosing a place to park. This being the case, it is telling that 80% found a parking space in less than 5 minutes (with 45 % finding a spot right away), 92% parked within 2 blocks of their destination (with 45% on the same block), and 84% thought that their parking was close enough to the destination.

Figure 35 Mode of Travel Between Downtown Destinations

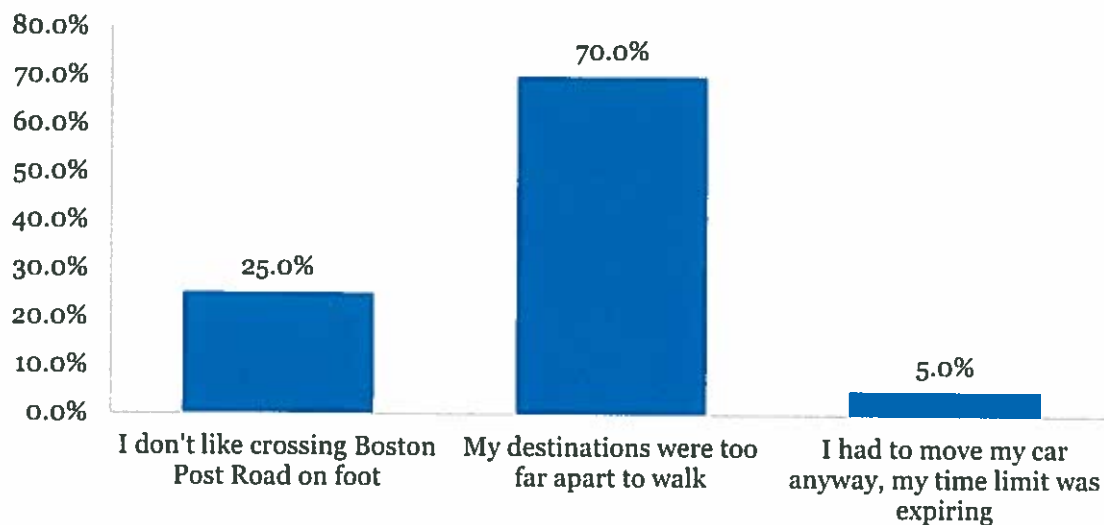


Respondents are nearly evenly split among those who went to a single destination, those who walked between destinations, and those who drove between destinations, with the later group making up the largest share. Surprisingly, only 5% have indicated that they moved their vehicles because of an expiring time limit, and there was little to no mention of time limits in any of the open ended response sections.

"It is imperative to me that I be able to park within a block of my destination, otherwise I won't get out of the car, I'll just skip it."

Instead, a robust majority (70%) cited the distance between locations as their primary motivation for doing so. Given the relatively small size of Downtown Darien this likely relates directly to the issues raised regarding the conditions of the pedestrian crossing facilities, as the perception of walking distance relates directly to the perception of the quality, convenience and/or safety of the walking environment. This is further supported by the fact that another 25% of respondents directly identify the need to cross Post Road as the reason for driving between downtown locations.

Figure 36 Reason for Driving Between Downtown Destinations



While only 5% noted that time limits led them to drive between downtown destinations, this does indicate a potential to better support “park once” and reduce excess traffic through changes to time limits, including the option of using price instead of time limits to manage duration and availability.

Comments

Following is a sampling of open-ended comments received from this group.

- Parking was very full and segregated by owner.
- I only go from there once in a while but would like more daily permit parking to be available.
- I would rather have parked on-street but there were no empty spaces.
- Need more crossings, better crosswalks, and traffic-calming.
- I would travel by bike if there were bike lanes and racks.
- Post road is dangerous to cross.
- Frequent need to jaywalk - not enough crosswalks
- *Feel exposed to traffic along the sidewalk at the train bridge.*
- More casual seating and "pocket park" type spots would be nice.
- This town needs sidewalks and bike lanes. Having to drive everywhere except the few downtown blocks is ridiculous and dangerous for our children.
- Bicycling should be considered when planning changes to downtown. Bike lanes and signage would making biking safer and more easily adopted. I would travel by bike to downtown if I felt safer with bike lanes throughout town, and on major routes into town.
- I have actually been surprised by the availability of parking downtown during the morning and lunchtime hours I have gone to run local errands.
- Allow for more long-term parking on underutilized street parking (e.g., along Old Kings Highway).